

consideration of the Christen nomination.

Under the previous order, there will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided and controlled in the usual form.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that all time be yielded back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island asks that all time be yielded back. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Morgan Christen, of Alaska, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Ninth Circuit?

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KERRY) is necessarily absent.

I further announce that if present and voting, the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KERRY) would vote "yea."

Mr. KYL. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 95, nays 3, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 231 Ex.]

#### YEAS—95

Akaka	Franken	Merkley
Alexander	Gillibrand	Mikulski
Ayotte	Graham	Murkowski
Barrasso	Grassley	Murray
Baucus	Hagan	Nelson (NE)
Begich	Harkin	Nelson (FL)
Bennet	Hatch	Portman
Bingaman	Heller	Pryor
Blumenthal	Hoeven	Reed
Blunt	Hutchison	Reid
Boozman	Inhofe	Risch
Boxer	Inouye	Roberts
Brown (MA)	Isakson	Rockefeller
Brown (OH)	Johanns	Rubio
Burr	Johnson (WI)	Sanders
Cantwell	Johnson (SD)	Schumer
Cardin	Kirk	Sessions
Carper	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Casey	Kohl	Shelby
Chambliss	Kyl	Snowe
Coats	Landrieu	Stabenow
Coburn	Lautenberg	Tester
Cochran	Leahy	Thune
Collins	Lee	Toomey
Conrad	Levin	Udall (CO)
Coons	Lieberman	Udall (NM)
Corker	Lugar	Warner
Cornyn	Manchin	Webb
Crapo	McCaill	Whitehouse
Durbin	McCaskey	Wicker
Enzi	McConnell	Wyden
Feinstein	Menendez	

#### NAYS—3

DeMint	Vitter
Paul	

#### NOT VOTING—2

Kerry	Moran
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The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table. The President will be

immediately notified of the Senate's action.

#### VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for the vote on the nomination of Morgan Christen, of Alaska, to be U.S. circuit judge for the Ninth Circuit. If I were able to attend today's session, I would have supported the Christen nomination.

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BEGICH. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business until 7 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ALASKA NATIVE CLAIMS SETTLEMENT ACT

Mr. BEGICH. Madam President, I come to the floor to first say "thank you" to my colleagues for supporting an incredible judge, but I also come to the floor today to mark an anniversary. December 18, 2011, marks the 40th anniversary of a truly historic date for the first people of Alaska—passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. To mark this historic occasion, Senator MURKOWSKI and I have submitted a Senate resolution to formally celebrate the success and contributions of Alaska Native people and their corporations. We will be asking for the unanimous consent of our colleagues to adopt this resolution at a certain point.

Over the past 40 years, Alaska has witnessed astonishing economic growth resulting from ANCSA. This has benefited not just Native people but all Alaskans. This historic piece of legislation allowed a new group of people who for centuries were economically disadvantaged to enter into the business world and to become economic leaders. Under ANCSA, they have contributed to the State and national economies in unprecedented ways. ANCSA has two primary goals: to resolve longstanding issues surrounding aboriginal land claims in Alaska and to stimulate economic development.

Many Alaskans led the charge on creation and passage of the claims act. My father, the late Representative Nick Begich, was one of them. There were many new Native leaders involved—Willie Hensley, John Borbridge, and other young advocates who very quickly engaged in this historic Native rights legislation.

Today, I would also like to recognize all the wives, daughters, sisters, secretaries, and other powerful women who

contributed to the passage of ANCSA. Many of them may not have received formal recognition of their contributions, women such as Marlene Johnson, who played an instrumental role in the creation and passage of ANCSA. She spent countless hours flying to and from southeast Alaska and Washington, DC, leaving behind her full-time job and five children, doing her part to see ANCSA move through Congress. To engage in negotiations, Alaskans would fly for days to get from Barrow or Fairbanks or Kotzebue to Washington, DC. Many of them camped out on couches and floors in Washington for months to get it done.

Today, Alaska Native corporations are tremendous economic drivers not only for Alaska but for the entire United States and even internationally. In 2010, 8 of the 10 most profitable businesses in Alaska were Alaska Native corporations. Of the five that topped \$1 billion, all were Native corporations.

Cash dividends paid to corporation shareholders continue to be a very important source of income for many Alaska Native individuals and families. In total, dividends paid by Alaska Native corporations to their shareholders rose by 39 percent from 2009 to 2010, up to \$171 million.

These dividends serve Native families in many ways. In some cases, they help provide basics, such as food and heating fuel or supplies and equipment to continue their subsistence way of life. For other families, shareholder dividends go into college savings accounts or new startup businesses. Sometimes they simply help offset the costs of caring for their aging loved ones.

For the business owners everywhere, Native and non-Native alike, shareholder dividends provide a major economic boost. Today, Alaska Native corporations and their subsidiaries are providing thousands of jobs across the United States. These corporations provide job training and scholarships and other support to create new opportunities for young shareholders and their descendants. The corporations also offer meaningful internships to help young Alaska Natives build long-standing professional careers within the corporate structure. Elders, the most respected people in the Native communities, receive special assistance and financial support from their corporations.

Clearly, 40 years later, many Alaska Native corporations have matured to become business leaders. Unfortunately, many others and the Alaska Natives they represent have not all had great success—yet.

The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act was one approach, an experiment to meet America's treaty obligations to the first people of this country. I will continue to support the Alaska Native tribes while also strengthening the capacity of the Alaska Native corporations.

Now we look forward to the next 40 years of ANCSA. I call on my colleagues in this Chamber to work together to help all American Indian and Alaska Native people gain their economic independence. Through ANCSA, we see this happening in Alaska. Alaska Native groups are proud of their culture and heritage but also of their business success. We all should be proud of this success.

In Alaska, we innovate. We rely on fresh approaches to solve our unique challenges. The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act is such an example. It was a monumental act of Congress—one my father pushed forward and I know is profoundly successful and one that today I profoundly defend.

With our national economy in its current state, we need more of this in America. We need to lift our people to build capacity and to allow the first people of this Nation to succeed. When that happens, we all benefit.

Madam President, Senator MURKOWSKI and I ask you and our colleagues to support this resolution to recognize and honor the impact and importance of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. More important, it honors Alaska's first people and their extraordinary accomplishments over the past 40 years.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

#### NOMINATION OF MORGAN CHRISTEN

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Madam President, I feel as if this is a little bit of Alaska day here. We just celebrated the very successful nomination of Morgan Christen to the Ninth Circuit. I am really quite proud of Morgan and her accomplishments. As an Alaskan and as an Alaskan woman, to achieve what Morgan has achieved, to be the example she has set makes me quite proud today. So I am pleased the Senate gave her such a resounding confirmation. This is quite significant for us, and Alaskans are feeling good today.

#### 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ALASKA NATIVE CLAIMS SETTLEMENT ACT

Ms. MURKOWSKI. As Senator BEGICH mentioned, Alaskans are celebrating other occasions this week as well.

I rise today to speak about a resolution Senator BEGICH and I have submitted that recognizes December 18, 2011, as the 40th anniversary of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. Our resolution recognizes and commends the significant achievements Alaska Native people have made over the past 40 years through their congressionally created Alaska Native corporations.

Not only has the Alaska community risen to the challenge of creating sustainable businesses, but they have created employment opportunities for our

Nation's citizens really across the country—not just located in the State of Alaska but really all across our country and through the world. Alaska Native corporations continue to make significant contributions to their communities, our Nation, and the global economy, and for this they should be commended and they should be applauded.

Our resolution encourages the citizens of the United States to acknowledge and support the leadership and continued efforts of Alaska Native people in managing their resources through the Alaska Native corporations. The resolution also sends a strong message of support to thousands of Alaska Native youth from across the State who are working and contributing positively to their families and to their communities, focusing their efforts on earning a college education, participating in cultural activities, and realizing a dream that they may one day earn places of leadership within their own corporations. Their efforts are recognized and appreciated.

Over this coming weekend, Alaska Natives and advocates from across the United States will participate in community dialogs and celebratory events to reflect upon what has been accomplished over these past 40 years since passage of ANCSA. Participants will focus on the next steps that are needed to improve upon the continued success and the unity of Alaska Native tribes, villages, and our corporations.

Through their participation and commitment to management of their resources through the vehicle of Alaska Native corporations, many young Alaska Native people will embark upon a lifetime journey of service, community engagement, and philanthropy. Alaska Native corporations have afforded a unique opportunity for Alaska Native people to gain valuable insights into the business world, while maintaining thoughtful focus on issues concerning Alaska Native tribes and communities.

The next generation of Alaska Native people will continue to make positive changes in the world around them through acquired leadership skills, cultural advocacy, and community engagement, and through their dedication and enthusiasm, the next generation of leaders honors the previous generation of Alaska Native leaders who really worked so very diligently to achieve the passage of the most significant Native lands settlement in our Nation's history.

In addition to all of the very remarkable young people who will one day be managers and policymakers of their Native corporations, I honor the work of those who contributed to the success of the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. It was no easy feat negotiating this very complex piece of litigation. It took the drafters years for the settlement to be discussed, to be interpreted, analyzed, debated, negotiated, and finalized. It was truly an accomplishment.

While no piece of legislation can claim perfection, the original drafters of the ANCSA bill worked tirelessly to achieve a fair and a just settlement for the native people of Alaska and the ever-evolving document has had a number of significant amendments that have considerably improved the original bill.

While a list acknowledging all of the Alaska Native leaders and advocates who worked on the act would prove impossibly long, I wish to recognize a few of the people who have since passed, who played an instrumental and an unforgettable role in its passage.

First, U.S. Secretary of the Interior, Secretary Udall. I had both TOM and MARK UDALL sitting right in front of me before I began my comments here. It is a tribute to him that he did so much in his service as Secretary of the Interior. Also our own Senator Ted Stevens and his efforts; U.S. Congressman Nick Begich, who was instrumental in passage of ANCSA, and Morris Thompson, who is an Athabaskan out of the Koyukon area. It was back in 1966 that Stewart Udall, who was Secretary of the Interior then, responded to pleas from Alaska Native groups, imposed a "land freeze" on all land in Alaska under Federal control, which amounted to about 96 percent of all the land in the State at the time. Secretary Udall helped develop a program for solutions to the Native land claims issue throughout the State. Although ANCSA at that time was still in its infancy, the freeze prevented the transfer of all remaining Federal lands and would remain in effect until the Native land claims were resolved. Without that freeze, the Alaska Native people might have won their claim but they may not have had lands to select.

Senator Stevens, in his role, called his work on the unprecedented landmark legislation of ANCSA his Senate baptism of fire. In a 1991 newspaper article, the Senator is quoted as saying that he believed a settlement could be achieved because of his "faith in the determination and the unity of purpose of Alaska's Native people." Senator Stevens was one of the advocates who pushed for the 40-million-acre land provision versus the 1 million acres the White House had initially proposed.

With threats looming that subcommittee sessions would be called off, which would effectively end a negotiated settlement, Congressman Nick Begich played a key role in keeping the legislative process moving. By the end of the negotiations, the subcommittee package was a tribute to the Congressman's role as architect of the House compromise. One veteran lobbyist said:

It is the best individual achievement I have ever heard of for a freshman Congressman.

I would be remiss in not mentioning the very unforgettable Morris Thompson. At 34 years old, Morris was the youngest commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. He held a Cabinet position in the Nixon administration and,